



Traumatic Brain Injury

Florida Definition

A traumatic brain injury means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects educational performance. The term applies to mild, moderate, or severe, open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one (1) or more areas such as cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, or speech. The term includes anoxia due to trauma. The term does not include brain injuries that are congenital, degenerative, or induced by birth trauma. This definition is found in State Board of Education Rule 6A-6.030153, F.A.C.

<http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/ese-eligibility/traumatic-brain-injury-tbi.shtml>

General Overview

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is an injury to the brain caused by the head being hit by something or shaken violently. This injury can change how the person acts, moves, and thinks. A traumatic brain injury can also change how a student learns and acts in school. The term TBI is used for injuries that can cause changes in one or more areas such as:

- Thinking and reasoning
- Understanding words
- Memory
- Paying attention
- Solving problems
- Abstract thinking
- Speech and communication
- Behavioral
- Gross and fine motor coordination
- Vision
- Hearing
- Learning

More than one million children receive brain injuries each year. More than 30,000 of these children have lifelong disabilities because of the brain injury.

Brain injuries can range from mild to severe, and so can the changes that result from the injury. This means that it's hard to predict how an individual will recover from the injury.

Early and ongoing help can make a significant difference in how the child recovers. This help can include physical or occupational therapy, counseling, and special education.

It's also important to know that, as the child grows and develops, parents and teachers may notice unfamiliar problems. This is because, as students grow, they are expected to use their brain in new and diverse ways. The damage to the brain from earlier injury can make it hard for the student to learn new skills that come with getting older. Sometimes parents and educators may not even realize that the student's difficulty comes from the earlier injury.

Although TBI is very common, many medical and educational professionals may not realize that some difficulties can be caused by a childhood brain injury. Often, students with TBI are thought to have a learning disability, emotional disturbance, or mental retardation. As a result, they don't receive the types of educational help and support they really need (Educating Exceptional Children, Chapter 12; National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities Fact Sheet Number 18 (NICHCY). <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/nichcy-gone/>

Common Causes

An acquired injury caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability and/or psychosocial impairment that require special education services. TBI accidents involve the head and may result in cognitive, social, and language deficits. Loss of a limb, broken bones, or paralysis may also result from accidents (Educating Exceptional Children, Chapter 12; National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities Fact Sheet Number 18 (NICHCY). <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/nichcy-gone/>

Characteristics

The signs of brain injury can be very different depending on where the brain injured and how severely. Children with TBI may have one or more disabilities, including:

Cognitive: Impaired cognitive functioning due to head trauma

- Examples include difficulty with short and long-term memory, maintaining focus, concentration; problems with reading, writing, planning, sequencing, and judgment

Motor/Sensory: Total or partial functional disability

- Examples include difficulty writing and drawing; involuntary muscle contractions or tightening; seizures; partial or complete paralysis on one or both sides of the body; problems walking and with balance; problems speaking, hearing, and using other senses

Communication: Limited or impaired ability to communicate

- Examples include physical problems with speech production and writing process.

Social/Emotional: Emotional impairment, limited social skills

- Examples include sudden changes in mood and emotions; increased anxiety and/or depression; restlessness; poor motivation; inability to relate to others